

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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SUBJ: CHANGES PROBABLY IN CABINET AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

REF: LAHORE 1347.

SUMMARY: WIDESPREAD SPECULATION CONTINUES ABOUT CHANGES IN PROVINCIAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENTS - SGEE REQUIRED BY NEW CONSTITUTION, OTHERS SUGGESTED BY POLITICAL CONVENIENCE. ALL POLITICAL POWER REMAINS FIRMLY IN BHUTTO'S HANDS AS HE MANIPULATES MANY COMPETING, HIGHLY PERSONALIZED FACTIONS WITHIN HE 0-456. GOVERNMENTAL EFFICIENCY AT THE TOP UNLIKELY TO IMPROVE WITH CHANGES BEING RUMORED. END SUMMARY.

1. SPECULATION ABOUT CHANGES IN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS AND CENTRAL CABINET PORTFOLIOS HAS REACHED NEW HEIGHTS AS MID-NOVEMBER CONSTITUTIONAL DEADLINE EFFECTING GOVERNORS APPROACHES. UNDER NEW CONSTITUTION, GOVERNORS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF NATIONAL OR PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES CANNOT RETAIN BOTH GOVERNORSHIPS AND ASSEMBLY MEMBER-
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SHIPS AFTER NOVEMBER 15. ALL BUT SIND GOVERNOR ARE

MEMBERS OF ASSEMBLIES. SECOND DEADLINE WILL BE REACHED FEBRUARY 15, WHEN MINISTERS IN CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL CABINETS MUST BECOME MEMBERS OF RESPECTIVE LEGISLATURES (INCLUDING, IN CASE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, THE SENATE) TO RETAIN THEIR PORTFOLIOS.

2. IN PUNJAB, ALREADY VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT GOVERNOR KHAR WILL BECOME CHIEF MINISTER REPLACING MERAJ KHALID, WHO WILL LEAD GOP DELEGATION TO UNGA DURING REMAINDER OF CURRENT UN SESSION (LAHORE REFTEL). WIDELY SPECULATED THAT CURRENT PUNJAB PROVINCIAL MINISTER SAIDIQ HUSSAIN QURESHI, MULTAN MNA, WILL RESIGN FROM ASSEMBLY AND REPLACE KHAR AS GOVERNOR.

3. IN FRONTIER, APPEARS THAT GOVERNOR KHATTAK IS INCLINED TO REMAIN AS GOVERNOR. PRESENT CENTRAL MINISTER SHERPAO EXPEKQGD TO RETAIN HIS PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY SEAT AND SEEK CHIEF MINISTERSHIP AGAINST WISHES OF KHATTAK SUPPORTERS PLUS BITTER OPPOSITION OF QAIYUM MUSLIM LEAGUERS. UNCLEAR AT THIS TIME HOW PERSONAL RIVALRIES AND CONFLICTING AMBITIONS WILL BE RESOLVED IN FRONTIER WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL BLOODLETTING WITHIN RANKS OF THOSE SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT. PRESUMABLY BHUTTO WILL BE REQUIRED TO EXERCISE HIS CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL SKILLS TO SORT THIS ONE OUT.

4. ALSO BELIEVED THAT GOVERNOR BUGTI WILL RETAIN HIS POST IN BALUCHISTAN, AT LEAST FOR TIME BEING, ALONG WITH CURRENT CHIEF MINISTER JAM SAHIB OF LASBELA. CURRENT FOOD AND AGRICULTURE MINISTER RAISANI, WHO LIKE SHERPAO HOLDS PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY SEAT, IS EXPECTED EITHER TO RETURN TO BALUCHISTAN AS PROVINCIAL MINISTER OR BE GIVEN AMBASSADOR SHIP (RAISANI HAS UNDERTAKEN NUMEROUS SPECIAL EMISSARY TRIPS ABROAD FOR BHUTTO). CURRENT SETUP IN SIND WITH BEGUM RANA LIAQUAT AS GOVERNOR AND MUMTAZ BHUTTO AS CHIEF MINISTER WILL CONTINUE.

5. WITH REGARD FEBRUARY 15 DEADLINE FOR CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL CABINET MINISTERS, BHUTTO HAS PUBLICLY STATED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT HE WISHES MINIMUM REPLACEMENT OF INCUMBENT OFFICE HOLDERS AND FEWEST POSSIBLE BY-ELECTIONS TO AVOID DISRUPTING GOVERNMENT BUSINESS. PRESS, HOWEVER, IS SPECULATING THAT FINANCE MINISTER HASAN, POPULARLY BLAMED FOR ECONOMIC SHORTCOMINGS OF REGIME, WILL LOSE FINANCE PORTFOLIO ALTHOUGH REMAINING IN CABINET. PRESS HAS ALSO REPORTED THAT CONTROVERSIAL HEALTH MINISTER SHEIKH RASHID MAY BE SHIFTED TO ANOTHER AREA.

OTHER RUMORS HAVE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO KHURSHID HASAN MEER LEAVING CABINET FOR PPP PARTY OFFICE. HALF-DOZEN OR SO CENTRAL CABINET CHANGES MAY THUS OCCUR DURING NEXT THREE MONTHS. NUMBER OF CHANGES IN PROVINCIAL PORTFOLIOS WILL ALSO BE REQUIRED BY FEBRUARY TO MEET CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

6. COMMENT: ANTICIPATED CHANGES IN CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS APPEAR TO HAVE LITTLE RELEVANCE TO NATIONAL POWER, WHICH REMAINS FIRMLY IN BHUTTO'S HANDS. WE WOULD EXPECT SOME SLIGHT SHIFT TO CENTER IDEOLOGICALLY IN CONTINUATION EARLIER TREND IN BHUTTO GOVERNMENT; I.E., FURTHER EROSION OF INFLUENCE AND POSITIONS OF LEFT-WINGERS OF PPP. BUT WE WOULD ALSO EXPECT BHUTTO TO CONTINUE TO EXERCISE HIS SUPREMACY BY PLACATING VARIOUS PERSONALITIES WITHIN PPP OR ENCOURAGING THEIR FEUDS. THIS TACTIC MAY NOT MAKE FOR MOST EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT BUT, IN PAKISTAN, AS ELSEWHERE, OFTEN MAKES GOOD POLITICS FOR INDIVIDUAL AT TOP.

7. BHUTTO IS ALSO MOVING TO GIVE PPP MEMBERS GREATER REWARDS BY CREATING POSTS OF PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY AT CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL LEVELS, BY INJECTION OF PPP SUPPORTERS AND RELATIVES OF PPP MEMBERS INTO CIVIL SERVICE, AND BY DISTRIBUTION OF MOST PARTY OFFICES TO PERSONS WHO DO NOT HAVE ASSEMBLY SEATS. SOME RUMORS AFLOAT THAT CIVIL SERVICE MAY SOON RECEIVE MASSIVE INFLOW OF POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS TO REPLACE CIVIL SERVANTS TO BE RETIRED BY LOWERING OF PRESENT MANDATORY RETIREMENT AGE. SOBER

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